

BHDDH Bulletin

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DIRECTOR

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From the Director: The Year in Review

2011 was a busy year for our Department. This issue of the BHDDH Bulletin is dedicated to the accomplishments, positive developments and new initiatives that are the results of everyone's hard work during the year. These achievements continue to support our commitment to assuring access to quality services and supports for Rhode Islanders with developmental disabilities, mental health and substance use issues, as well as those with chronic long term medical and psychiatric conditions.

Thank you for your efforts, and I wish all of you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2012.

Eleanor Slater Hospital Receives Full Joint Commission Accreditation

Representatives from the Joint Commission recently completed their three-year survey of Eleanor Slater Hospital. Surveyors stated that they were impressed with the positive changes and improvements that have occurred over the past three years. The lead surveyor commented on the commitment, compassion, and dedication of hospital employees to improving the quality of life for all patients at the Hospital.

Governor Chafee and Director Stenning attended part of the review. The survey team indicated that this was the first Joint Commission Leadership Meeting that they have conducted where both the Governor and Department Director were in attendance.

Project Sustainability Implemented

Project Sustainability, an initiative intended to increase transparency and consistency across the system of services available to persons with developmental disabilities, was implemented on July 1, 2011. It is a collaborative effort focused on developing a system that supports individual choice and self-direction, provides equitable assessment and transparent rate methodology, and above all, is sustainable. New regulations were developed to protect individual health, safety and choice. CMS approval was officially received in December, 2011.

Governor Chafee Signs Vocational/Jobs Bill for Individuals with Disabilities

In July of this year, BHDDH's employment/jobs bill for disabled individuals passed and Governor Chafee signed it into law. The purpose of this legislation is to encourage people with disabilities to work and to assist them in achieving gainful employment. The departments of the State are required to purchase products and services from certified vocational rehabilitation programs that meet State requirements.

BHDDH Receives Grant to Integrate Peer Wellness Coaches into Community Mental Health System

BHDDH received a federal grant to integrate peer wellness coaches into the community mental health system. These individuals are required to meet specific criteria, including having experienced mental illness, being well-grounded in recovery and committed to individual choice and empowerment.

Health Homes Program Approved

A state plan amendment for Medicaid Health Homes, submitted by BHDDH in collaboration with the state Medicaid authority of the Office of Health & Human Services (OHHS), was approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on November 23. The amendment provides BHDDH with enhanced federal funding for the coordination of physical care and behavioral healthcare for individuals who have serious and persistent mental health conditions. Because persons with serious and persistent mental illness (SPMI) are now dying 25 years earlier than the general population and a high percentage of people with mental health conditions have co-morbidities, it is believed that there are many in this population who can be better served when physical care is coordinated with behavioral healthcare.

Rhode Island is the first state in the country to address coordinated care for individuals with serious mental illness and to discuss peer supports in a health homes state plan amendment. With the implementation of this program, there is an expectation of cost savings across inpatient hospital settings and emergency room care systems. The results for individuals will be longer lives, fewer emergency room visits, better access to both physical and behavioral health care, and a decline in the number of hospitalizations.



Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care

BHDDH, in conjunction with the Rhode Island Recovery Month Coalition, was selected and received the 2010 National Recovery Month Annual Event Award. It is given in recognition of exceptional efforts to expand the breadth and reach of National Recovery Month in 2010 in Rhode Island. Director Stenning accepted the award on September 8 in Washington, DC.

BHDDH and the Rhode Island Recovery Month Coalition hosted the ninth annual Rally for Recovery on September 10 at the Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence. The Rally is held to raise awareness about drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness, developmental disabilities and the journey of recovery. Over 4,000 people attended the 2011 Rally.

The first annual Rallies for Recovery at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections were hosted by BHDDH and the Rhode Island Recovery Month Coalition. One rally was held at the men's medium security facility on September 13 and two were held at the men's minimum security facility on September 14. Later in the month, rallies were also held in the women's facilities.

Thresholds Program Continues to Provide Housing for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities, including Homeless Veterans

BHDDH allocated Threshold funds for the development of new housing for the formerly incarcerated. The renovation of the former Sealtest factory building includes 19 new rental homes (one-bedroom and studio apartments). One of the 19 apartments will house an individual with developmental disabilities.

Recently, BHDDH allocated \$519,269 for two housing projects for veterans. One of the projects involves the development of one efficiency apartment and 19 one-bedroom units. Four of the units for homeless veterans with developmental disabilities or behavioral health issues will be funded by Thresholds. The second project will provide six permanent apartments for homeless veterans, one of which will be funded by Thresholds.

BHDDH Hitting Number of People Served by Access to Recovery (ATR) Grant

BHDDH is hitting the target number of people served by the Access to Recovery 3 (ATR) grant, a four-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This is a positive development since the target is significantly larger than those of previous ATR grants. The purpose of the ATR is to provide expanded service options for participants with substance abuse issues and ensure that they are able to freely and independently choose service providers that best meet their identified needs.

BHDDH Conducts Statewide Developmental Disability Day Program and Employment Survey

This initiative was established to assess how many hours individuals in the developmental disability population are spending in employment and the amount of time each is spending in day program activities. BHDDH is evaluating data to ensure that these individuals have the opportunity to be employed in addition to attending day programs.

Operation Immersion Hosted by BHDDH and RI National Guard

Behavioral health workers from BHDDH, along with behavioral health service providers across Rhode Island and from neighboring states, participated in training with the Rhode Island National Guard at Camp Fogarty in East Greenwich on September 22 and 23.

The event, named "Operation Immersion" was co-hosted by BHDDH and the RI National Guard. Attendees experienced parts of military life, including receiving platoon assignments, marching drills, "rise and shine", roll call, physical training, military vehicle convoy training and taps before lights out at night.

Program participants also received training directly related to behavioral health, such as substance use disorders and the returning soldier, military culture, and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) issues unique to soldiers. Servicemen and women shared their stories about deployment, and military family members talked about their experiences before, during and after the deployment of loved ones.

BHDDH Initiates Statewide Hospital Task Force for Inpatient Psychiatric Care

BHDDH, along with all community hospitals and the Department of Health, initiated a hospital task force to review the availability of inpatient psychiatric beds and clients waiting in emergency rooms to access inpatient beds. Beginning in 2012, hospitals will be able to update the availability of inpatient psychiatric beds in their facilities, and this information will be visible to all hospitals, at any time of day, so that clients who are waiting for beds in emergency rooms can be placed.

Please submit any items that may be of interest to our readers by e-mail or fax to Deb Varga (dvarga@bhddh.ri.gov; fax: 401-462-3204).